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CURSORY REMARKS  
ON THE  
ARMY IN GENERAL,  
AND THE  
FOOT GUARDS IN PARTICULAR.  
IN A  
LETTER  
TO  
THE KING.

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By HENRY SINCLAIR.

LATE CAPTAIN-LIEUTENANT IN THE FIFTY-SEVENTH REGIMENT.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following Letter was solely intended for the private eye of The King; but as the author found every avenue to his Sovereign shut up, except through the medium of the Press, he, at the solicitation of his friends, and by the advice of many whose opinion he regards more than his own, adopted the resolution of making it public; and shall deem it the happiest period of his life, if it is found to contribute, either to the improvement of His Majesty's troops, or the safety of his subjects.



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A

## LETTER TO THE KING.

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SIRE,

WITH every sentiment of respect for your Royal Person, the highest reverence for your government, and a zeal bordering upon enthusiasm for the service in which I have passed eight years of my life, I approach your Majesty; and with the humility of a subject, and the freedom of a foldier, entreat permission to state some observations on your Majesty's Army in general, and the *corps* of Foot Guards in particular. If my sentiments merit your Majesty's perusal, and in any degree contribute to the benefit of the service, it will add to the happiness of a life I would devote to my king and country. If, on the contrary, they are deemed unworthy of attention, I can only apologize to your Majesty for a presumption that originated in an honest zeal, and the consciousness of having meant well.

THE



## THE CORPS OF FOOT GUARDS.

YOUR Majesty's Foot Guards, perhaps the finest *corps* in the world, are satirised by disciplinarians, for their ignorance of the service. That this censure is, in some degree, founded, must arise from their having little experience, except what they attain on the parade in St. James's Park.

The MARTINETS of marching regiments, pluming themselves upon their superior knowledge of military *tactics*, frequently ridicule the effeminacy of the officers of this *corps*. To state the grounds of their ridicule, and to propose a plan to prevent effeminacy obtruding itself still more into your Majesty's army, is the object of this Letter.

If we take a retrospective view for many years preceding the present period, we shall find that men of the first families have paid great attention to every vacant ensigncy in the Guards. Having obtained a commission for a son, with or without purchase, as it might happen, the next object is to lay a foundation for his rapid promotion. While the son finds pleasure and amusement in the little attendance to the duty of his *corps*, the father is strengthening his interest at the War-Office.

The young foldier, now introduced into life, finds in a gay metropolis sufficient food for his vanity. He is initiated in vices  
and



and follies, which, though totally inconsistent with the duty of a soldier, his rank and fortune enable him to indulge: but these it is not any immediate concern of mine to notice, farther than relates to their influence upon the service.

With great humility, I presume to lay before your Majesty, some collateral circumstances, which may open a field for your Royal consideration.

The *effeminacy* with which this *corps* has been charged, is chiefly owing to the want of internal economy, and the improper distribution of the different battalions. It is not possible for an Officer to know the duty and character of a soldier, without being regularly quartered with him in barracks.

It at present rests with the executive branch of Government, to obtain the consent of both Houses of Parliament, to provide, not only barracks for your Majesty's Foot Guards, but also to have regular cantonments\* erected throughout the kingdom for  
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\* The propriety of having barracks for the accommodation of soldiers, who protect the lives and properties of your Majesty's subjects, no one will deny; and a recent, though unfortunate, circumstance, proves the necessity. When the insurrections at Birmingham took place, there were not any military at a less distance than fifty miles. Their presence would have prevented all the evils that afterwards followed. The reason given for their not being quartered in the vicinity, was, that



the reception of marching regiments. This plan, if tried, would, I am persuaded, check, if not remove the evil.

The distribution of the privates in the Guards, is productive of the most pernicious, and often the most dangerous effects. Their being billeted on publicans, exposes them to the temptation of frequent intoxication; for, in such receptacles, they too often meet with loose and disorderly associates, by whom they are led into expences that the pay of a soldier cannot support; and from hence proceed their consequent depredations on the property and persons of the public.

These evils, there is reason to believe, would be prevented by a well-regulated barrack, where the soldiers must attend the different *parades*, as well as *roll-calling*, which might be repeated as often as the discretion of the Commanding Officer found it necessary, or, by his order, given to the Officer of the day; and also at *tattoo*, when each soldier is obliged to repair to his quarters. By this well-regulated soldier-like system, incidents of an evil tendency would be avoided; discipline regularly attended to; messes regulated for the soldiery; and sobriety preserved.

*Birmingham* being a manufacturing town, troops stationed, and soldiers billeted in their houses, incommode their workmen. To remove this trifling grievance, the lives and property of the inhabitants were exposed. The incendiaries knew that none of the army were near; and that therefore they could at any time master the civil power. From hence proceeded the late destructive tumults.

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A good soldier finds a pleasure in obeying his superiors: subordination becomes habitual, and by no means unpleasant to him. When he finds his Officer strict and attentive to duty, the faithful fellow, emulous to please, follows the noble example of his commander. *A British soldier is a generous character! A British soldier is a brave man!*

Having suggested the necessity of erecting barracks, especially for the Foot Guards, it now becomes necessary to urge other motives in support of my opinion, and to prove the utility of my plan. Exclusive of the above-mentioned advantages respecting the ease and convenience of the military in barracks, I shall next endeavour to prove, that the want of barracks introduces and feeds that effeminacy which the Officers of your Majesty's Guards are charged with. Here I must be permitted to enforce my first position: "No Officer can know the duty and character of a soldier, unless he is regularly quartered with him in barracks."

The want of barracks for the accommodation of Officers and Privates in your Majesty's Foot Guards, frustrates the ends for which military discipline is designed. The men are scattered and left to their own discretion: the Officers, whose fortunes are generally opulent, neglect their duty, and devote their hours to the pursuit of pleasure. Except when it is their turn for duty, at a review of necessaries, a field-day or a muster, relaxation takes place of strict attention to duty, and renders the Officers and soldiers inattentive to that service, which every method should



be taken to impress them with the idea of being, what it really is—an honour.

That the evil consequences attending these defects in *military discipline* would be removed by the introduction of barracks, will appear from the following reasons. The Officers quartered with their battalions would parade twice a day, to examine the arms, uniformity, neatness, and sobriety of the soldiers: and, by habit, they would find a satisfaction in attending to their duty. The soldiers would acquire consequence and confidence in themselves by witnessing the attention of their superiors, who would thus become acquainted with the temper and disposition of their men; which is as necessary a study to form a good soldier, as it is requisite for a parent to model a child, or a schoolmaster his pupil.

My next observation leads to another point of some moment. By establishing barracks for the use of your Majesty's Guards, exclusive of other advantages, on the serjeant's calling over the roll of the company, previous to their being brought to the regimental parade, the names of the privates, and their persons, would become familiar to the Officers attached to the company. Whereas, by the present mode, it is doubtful if any Officer, Majors and Adjutants excepted, in the three regiments of Foot Guards, can stand in front of his own company, and call promiscuously from the ranks, half the men by their proper names. This brings to my recollection, the ludicrous anecdote



anecdote I have heard recited :—" A Captain of a company of the Guards came to the grand parade, to attend his regiment to Hyde Park on a general *field-day*: after parading in front of his regiment for several minutes, in search of his own company, which he could not find, he turned round to the Adjutant, and requested to know why it was not formed with the battalion? the Adjutant replied, *It was*, and pointed to the company. This mistake produced no small diversion to the gentlemen of the *corps*, who thought that he might at least have known his non-commissioned Officers. The Captain, with great good humour, candidly confessed he *missed one of his soldiers who had a large nose*. The poor fellow had been that day left sick in the regimental hospital." No one will doubt the probability of this anecdote, who recollects how seldom a Captain of the Guards sees his men, or has an opportunity of even hearing their names called over.

THE GUARDS BEING OFFICERED BY MEN OF THE  
FIRST DISTINCTION AND FORTUNE, IS, IN ITS  
CONSEQUENCES, DETRIMENTAL TO THE SER-  
VICE.

SINCE their first institution to the present day, numerous volunteers have been upon the list for preferment. An ambition for the *most* honourable situation is laudable. To give preference to the honour of serving in a *corps* attending more immediately on the person of Majesty, is natural: but with these advantages, and the superior rank affixed to the Guards, Is the duty better done? For

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the reasons already assigned, and those which shall follow, I answer, No. Many Officers enter the service in your Majesty's Guards, for the mere purpose of being entitled to wear a cockade. The duty they have to attend, they make only an amusement; for, on the eve of a war, we find *resignations* in abundance. By young Officers succeeding to those of experience, the service is injured. For this conduct two reasons may be assigned. Those who give in their resignations, are generally men of fortune, averse to that subordination which is necessary for soldiers every where except in St. James's Park. An Officer who resigns on these emergencies, may perhaps be betrothed or married to a woman whom he loves: in this instance he is naturally induced to give up every other pursuit, for the soft endearments of connubial bliss and domestic enjoyment.

Another custom in its consequences pernicious to the service, is, that Officers from marching regiments, should, by exchange, be suffered to enter into the *Foot Guards*. This evil, for so I must term it, arises from the Lieutenant Colonels of marching regiments frequently exchanging with those Captains of companies in the Guards who have equal rank in the Army.

The Lieutenant Colonel from a marching regiment, when he exchanges into the Guards, has either a matrimonial view, and gives the *virtuous metropolis* the preference; or a seat in the House of Commons, where no Officer should be allowed to sit, his attendance being required to do his duty with his regiment; or  
perhaps



perhaps he enters his second childhood, and wishes to parade the fashionable streets at the Court end of the town, with all the effeminacy of a young Ensign, being tired of more active and manly pursuits.

Let us next view the awkward situation in which a Captain who has quitted the Guards must be placed, on taking the command of a marching regiment as *Lieutenant Colonel*. If he exchanged from pecuniary motives, a circumstance which I fear is too often the case, and has not paid proper attention to *l'art militaire*, he will make a very poor figure before those veterans who are found in marching regiments, and in general so well acquainted with every *manœuvre* of a battalion, that they will ridicule his ignorance.

In taking a cursory view of this mode of exchange, it may be necessary to shew, why it is detrimental to the service. First, then, because it is to be supposed, that an Officer of experience, who is taken from the head of a marching regiment to command a company in the Guards, has, from the subordinate station in which he is now placed, no opportunity of displaying the military knowledge he may possess. On the other hand, a Captain from the Guards, with little or no military skill, is sent to command a marching regiment. Though I readily admit that I know some good Officers in the Guards, that *corps* is best calculated for dissipated young men of pleasure, fortune and fashion, and those



Officers of marching regiments, who are tired of the active movements inseparable from Infantry.

### RANK OF THE OFFICERS OF FOOT GUARDS DETRIMENTAL TO THE SERVICE.

A Lieutenant of the Guards, who ranks as a Captain in the Army, on succeeding to a Company, gains the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. I, without hesitation, pronounce this rapid rise prejudicial to the service. It is hurtful to the service, to give partial rank to Officers of the Guards. This will be clearly exemplified by inspecting the *Army List* for the present year, where your Majesty will see many young men Captains of companies in the Guards, and very old Lieutenant Colonels in the line. From hence it will appear, that if the rank goes on as rapidly for a few years to come, as it has for some time past, the *corps* of Foot Guards alone, will produce a sufficient number of General Officers to command every regiment of foot in the service. Now, if we admit the *effeminacy* of the Officers of your Majesty's *corps* of Foot Guards; the little opportunity they have of witnessing real military *manœuvre*, and contingencies depending thereon, by their fixed station; we consequently must allow much imperfection in the internal discipline of that body, which, if it does not *always*, will *generally* prove detrimental to the service.

PREVENTION.



## PREVENTION.

HAVING now arrived at the grand climax of the subject, I shall endeavour to suggest a plan, comprehended in a very few words, to prevent the supposed effeminacy attributed to the Officers who compose the *corps* of Foot Guards, and to render essential and permanent services on veteran principles. The plan I therefore take the liberty to propose, is, That the *corps* of your Majesty's Foot Guards should be ordered to take the duty in *routine* with those of marching regiments of Infantry, including in their route, England, Scotland, Ireland, and Gibraltar, but no other place beyond the seas, except in time of war. By adopting this mode, *effeminacy* would be entirely rooted out; those gentlemen who volunteer to officer the Guards for mere pleasure and amusement, would relinquish their commissions and sinecures, and others would be substituted in their room, whose pride and ambition to know the duty of a soldier, might, in the issue, produce the most manly achievements. In pursuing this plan of reform, six battalions, or more, of marching Infantry, might be ordered to do the duty of St. James's, yearly, or longer as it might be thought expedient. By this means your Majesty would in a few years have the opportunity of reviewing veterans whose hairs are silvered o'er in the service of their country, and seeing your whole army.



THE ARMY IN GENERAL, WITH REFERENCE TO  
THE CORPS OF FOOT GUARDS.

HAVING suggested the mode of internal discipline requisite to promote the good of the service, it is unnecessary to trespass any longer on your Majesty's time, especially as, by this mode, the duty of the Foot Guards bears such affinity to the duty of the Line, that there is no new ground to traverse; I shall therefore solicit the liberty to make some observations respecting the Promotions of the Army in general.

There are few Officers of the British Army, who have not, in their military capacity, had real cause of complaint by the injustice too often done them in the line of promotion. The mode of coming into your Majesty's Army by purchase, unless managed with more impartiality, ought not to subsist. Its hurt to the service in general is reprobated by brave veterans, not only in our own, but foreign countries, where such practices do not exist. To see a boy step, by purchase, over the heads of old Officers, who have fought and bled in the service of their country, is too mortifying a prospect. It wounds the feelings of meritorious Officers, whose length of service justly entitles them to attention and reward.

I know it is the wish of some *great Officers*, to have the Army put upon a more respectable footing; and *their wise ideas* extend  
thus



thus far, that it can only be acquired by inviting young men of great fortune to enter the service, no matter of what extraction. But all their reasonings put together, shall never make me sacrifice my opinion at the expence of saying what I do not think; and whilst I allow that there are some exceptions, I must also beg leave to assert, that I hardly ever knew an Officer who was a man of large fortune, pay a strict attention to his duty. No, no; the duty of the Army is done by Gentlemen's sons of circumscribed fortunes, which will not afford dissipation, and other excesses incompatible with the duty of a soldier.

#### PAY OF THE ARMY.

ANOTHER object considerable in its magnitude, and destructive in its consequences, is the Pay of the Army. Ever since the reign of Queen Anne, almost a century ago, there has been no augmentation to the Pay of either Officers or Privates, though every necessary in life is, I may venture to affirm, taking it at an average, treble the price it was during the reign of that Princess. When we witness the continual advance of wages to every other profession, in consequence of the high prices affixed to each article of living, is it not surprizing,---nay, is it not an insult to the generosity of Englishmen; the richest, happiest, and most enviable people on earth; to suppose that they would have a shadow of hesitation to contribute with chearfulness to advance the Pay of the Army? Can an Ensign, who must support the  
dignity



dignity which his situation requires, live on three shillings and sixpence per day? Can a brave faithful foldier, who risks his life on all occasions to promote the interest of his country, exist on sixpence? Englishmen have a nobleness of soul, a generosity beyond other nations; this your Majesty knows, and glories in the sovereignty over so brave a people. Yet we have not one Member in the House of Commons, who is disinterested enough to stand forward in that assembly of the nation, and claim an advance of pay to the best troops in the world—*British Soldiers.*

To protect, and do justice to such an useful body of men, many expenditures of the public money might be curtailed. This I do not presume to dictate. To the wisdom of the Legislature I leave it.

I beg leave, however, to suggest one expedient closely connected with the subject, and that is, the reduction of the Half-Pay List, by bringing all Officers on that establishment, who were reduced last war, and are now fit for service, on full pay, when vacancies happen. This would be doing justice to many gallant, deserving men, as well as prove a great saving to the country. Had their situations been considered when the independent companies were first in agitation to be raised last year, a considerable reduction in the Half-Pay List would have taken place, as great numbers of Officers, with a view of promotion,



promotion, would have raised men. Instead of this, through a mistaken idea at the War Office, every young Officer on full pay, at hand, was invited to give in his name, provided he was willing to raise men for a step, which of course was accepted by those who had money; in consequence of which, Ensigns got Lieutenancies who had never seen their regiments, and Lieutenants companies, several of whom were not of six months standing: nor were the situations of the Gentlemen on the Half-Pay List thought of, till numbers were at the great expence of coming from all quarters, to substantiate their claim to promotion; many of whom came too late, which might have been prevented, if circular letters had been sent at the time their services should have been considered.

This economical reform would lessen the burthens of the Public; would also assist their liberal and noble efforts in augmenting the Pay of the Army, which might be levied generously, though with economy. Exclusive of the satisfaction your Majesty's subjects would enjoy in contributing to the support of your Army, it would also convince other Powers, that Britain amply provides for her forces, and they, in return, will bravely guard her coast from every foreign invasion.

I have the honour to be,

With profound respect,

Your Majesty's

Most devoted, humble servant, &c.



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